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Gardner-Webb University Prepares to Welcome Students Back to Campus

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CAMPUS NEWS

Gardner-Webb University Prepares to Welcome Students Back to Campus

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JANUARY 8, 2021



All Students Attending Face-to-Face Classes in Boiling Springs Must be Tested for COVID-19 Upon Returning

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University faculty and staff are preparing to welcome back more than 1,750 residential, undergraduate and graduate students who will attend face-to-face classes on the Boiling Springs campus for the spring semester. Equipped with information learned during the fall, David S. Wacaster, director of operations for GWU Facilities and Maintenance, along with the Daily COVID Team, are implementing new testing requirements and disinfecting procedures before the first day of classes on Jan. 13.

These new procedures will help Gardner-Webb ensure a healthy environment for students, faculty, staff and the community. “Disinfection is a critical piece of keeping our buildings safe and the occupants healthy, so we have purchased electrostatic disinfecting machines for our housekeeping staff,” Wacaster informed. “The second advancement is rapid testing capabilities. Through our partnership with the NCICU (North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities) and local health officials, we were able to obtain enough kits to provide testing for all returning students.”

All students attending face-to-face classes on the Boiling Springs campus must be tested for COVID-19 before they return to their residence halls or before attending the first day of class. Individual student ID cards, which include residence hall access, will not be activated until a negative test is received. The free, on-campus Rapid-Tests will be offered Jan. 10-12. A positive Rapid-Test returned on those days will require the student to immediately isolate either on campus or by returning home.

The COVID-19 Rapid-Tests will be waived if the student provides one of the following at the time of check-in:

- Documentation of a negative COVID-19 test in the 72 hours prior to returning to campus.
- Documentation of a positive COVID-19 test in the 90 days prior to returning to campus.



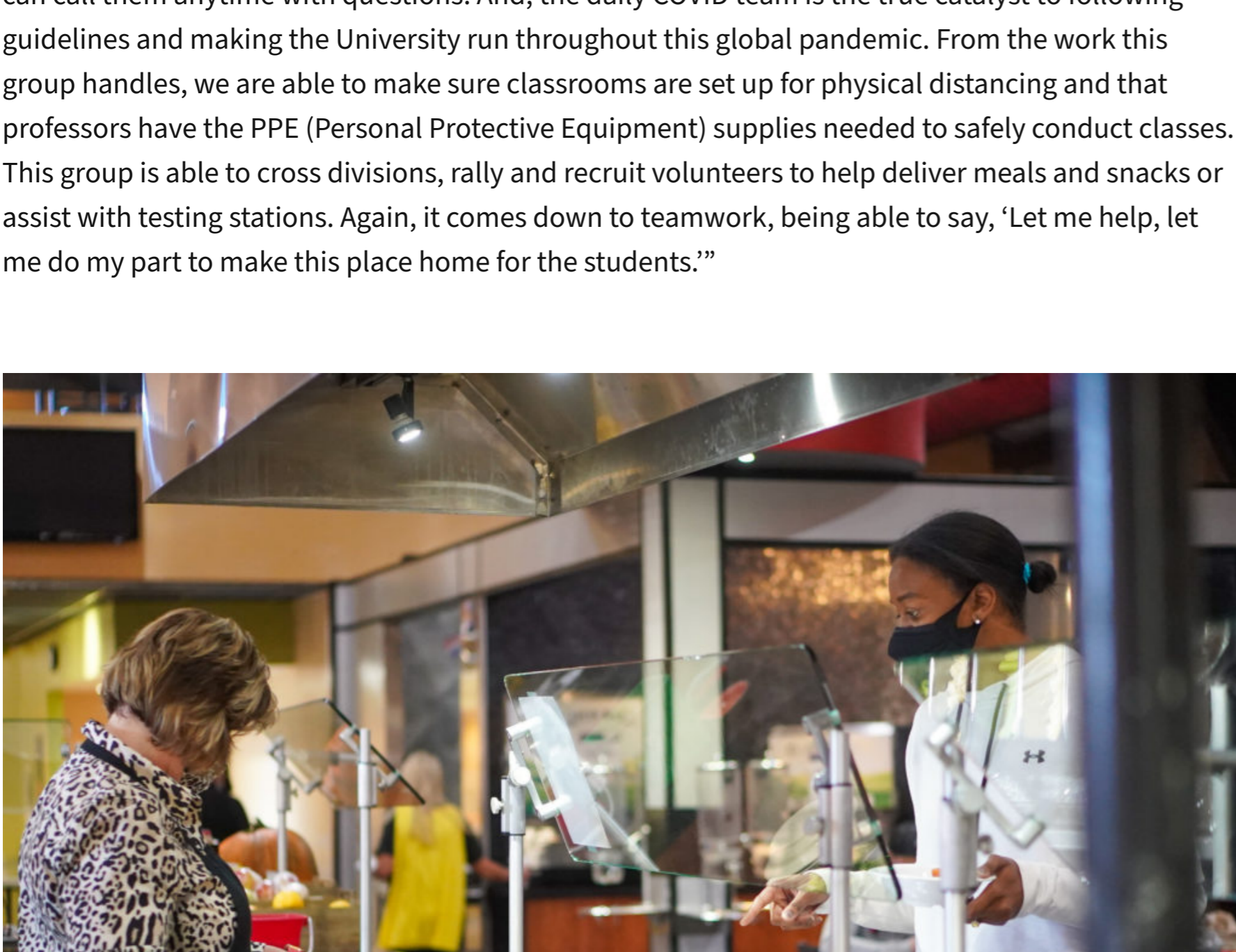
Barry Lane, left, director of Environmental and Occupational Safety, and David Wacaster, director of Facilities and Maintenance, pose with COVID-19 cleaning supplies and Personal Protective Equipment. Photo by Robin Jackson / GWU Student Photo Team

Since the pandemic began in early 2020, Gardner-Webb's campus community has followed safety guidelines to minimize COVID-19's impact and to keep students on course to complete their educational goals. Weekly campus updates were provided with reminders to wear face coverings, practice social distancing and wash hands frequently. Hand sanitizing stations and informational signs were placed around campus, especially in high-traffic areas. Attendance at on-campus gatherings was limited; and traditional in-person events, such as commencement and Festival of Lights, were presented in a virtual format.

“I would say that a big theme has been teamwork,” Wacaster observed. “In August, we faced a lot of uncertainty of how this would work, but the University family came together and worked across department lines in order for us to complete the fall semester intact and without major interruptions. Every day, a group of us meet to discuss how COVID is impacting our campus. This group is made up of individuals from Athletics, Student Development and Operations. This collaboration of individuals is the start of being able to pull off, at times, a herculean task.”

Many times, GWU President Dr. William Downs, as well as local health department officials, joined the team's calls to be informed of the situation on campus. The COVID team, under the leadership of Barry Lane, director of Environmental and Occupational Safety, also took on the responsibility of getting information to professors, moving students into and out of isolation units, cleaning the units, and providing meals three times a day, seven days a week for students in quarantine. To implement proper protocols, Lane established key contacts with personnel at the Cleveland County Health Department (Shelby, N.C.).

“The health department has been pivotal in providing the information we need,” Lane asserted. “I can call them anytime with questions. And, the daily COVID team is the true catalyst to following guidelines and making the University run throughout this global pandemic. From the work this group handles, we are able to make sure classrooms are set up for physical distancing and that professors have the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) supplies needed to safely conduct classes. This group is able to cross divisions, rally and recruit volunteers to help deliver meals and snacks or assist with testing stations. Again, it comes down to teamwork, being able to say, ‘Let me help, let me do my part to make this place home for the students.’”



Suzanne Glasscock, the general manager of Sodexo at Gardner-Webb University, serves a student in the cafeteria. Photo by Lisa Martinat Price / GWU Student Photo Team

This semester, staff will continue frequent disinfection of high-touch surfaces and restrooms. New equipment will increase air flow in Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center, Bost Gym, Suttle Wellness, and the Football Weight Room, and 10 rapid air recovery units will help disinfect the isolation/quarantine rooms between uses. The University has also purchased a large supply of PPE.

As announced previously, faculty will teach through Spring Break, March 8-12, with classes held every day that week. The last day of classes for traditional undergraduate students will be April 29, and graduation is scheduled for May 8.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.

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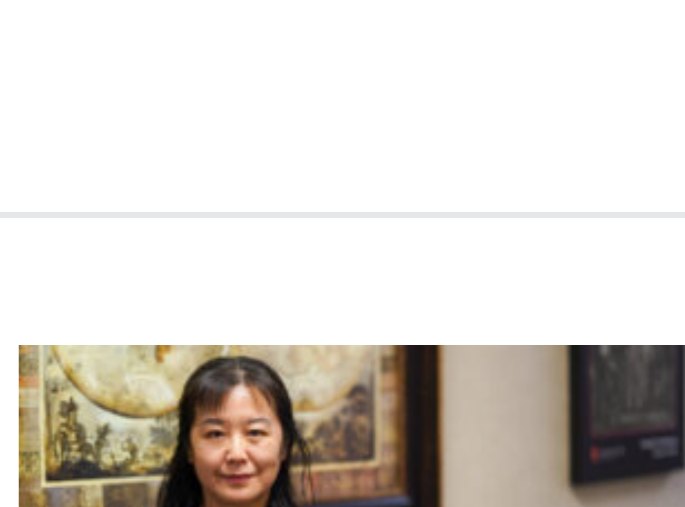


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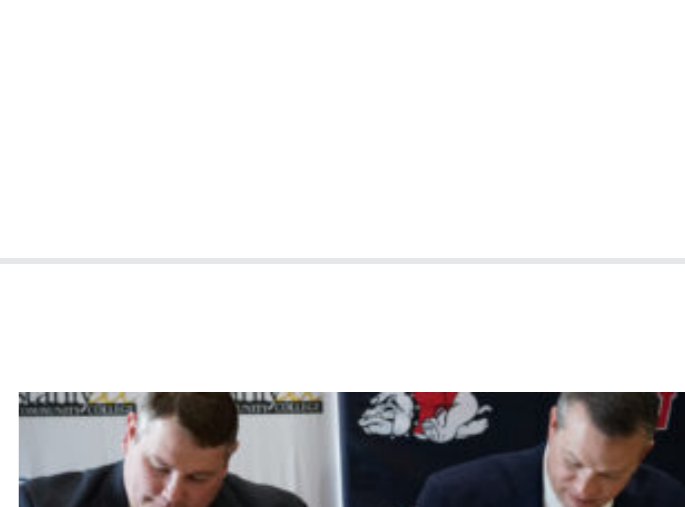


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'Bulldog-Bound' and Pathway Agreements Make Transferring to GWU Easy for SCC Students BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Officials from Gardner-Webb University and Stanly Community College (SCC) in Albemarle, N.C., signed agreements on April [...]

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